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I claim:

- 1) An electronic messaging system including a mail server which sends and receives messages, said mail server including a watermark reading program which reads watermarks in said messages and which controls the distribution of said messages in response to data in said watermarks.
- 2) A system which includes an e-mail server connected to the Internet means for transmitting messages from individual user to said e-mail server, watermark detecting means for detecting and reading watermarks in e-mail messages before such messages are transmitted from said e-mail server to the Internet, means for preventing the transmission of messages from said e-mail server to the Internet if said watermark detecting means detects a watermark which has an indication that the message containing said watermark is confidential.
- 3) A system for controlling the distribution of electronic messages that contain confidential information, each electronic message containing confidential information including a digital watermark carrying data that indicates that the message is confidential, a server which transmits and receives messages, said server including a watermark reading program which reads watermarks in messages and controls the distribution of such messages in accordance with the data carried by any watermarks in the messages.
- 4) The system recited in claim 4 where the messages are transmitted over the Internet.

1 5) A method of controlling the distribution of electronic messages that contain confidential
 2 information, said messages containing digital watermarks which carry data indicating that
 3 the message contains confidential information,
 4 reading watermarks in messages prior to transmission of said messages, and
 5 controlling the distribution of each electronic message which contains a watermark in
 6 response to the data carried by the watermark in the message.

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 8 6) The method recited in claim 5 wherein said messages are transmitted over the Internet.

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 10 7) The method recited in claim 5 wherein a data base is interrogated to determine the
 11 action to take with a particular message.

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 13 8) The method recited in claim 5 wherein the action taken with respect to a particular
 14 message is dependent on the identity of the sender, the identify of the receiver and
 15 information carried by the watermark.

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 17 9) The method recited in claim 5 wherein the action taken with respect to a a particular
 18 message is dependent on the identity of the sender, the identify of the receiver,
 19 information carried by the watermark, and information stored in a data base.

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2 10) A method of transmitting electronic messages from a sender to a receiver which
3 comprises,
4 detecting and reading digital watermarks contained in such messages to determine how
5 the flags in such watermarks are set,
6 interrogating a data base to determine what action should be taken with a message based
7 upon the identity of the sender, the identity of the receiver and the flag settings in the
8 watermark in the message.

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10 11) The method specified in claim 10 recited in claim 10 wherein said messages are
11 transmitted over the Internet.

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13 12) The method recited in claim 10 where the data carried by said watermark indicates if
14 the message contains confidential information.

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